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ABSTRACT

As in the first year of the Adult Education for the Homeless (AEH) Program, a majority of second- and third-year projects tended to focus on either delivery of services in urban areas or on a statewide approach. A few states continued an approach that resulted in service primarily to women. The number of homeless adults served in year 2 increased 60 percent over year 1 but then declined in year 3 for two reasons: some "high number" states did not receive year 3 funds and projects using year 3 funds placed priority on program quality over numbers served. The largest number served were between the ages of 25-44 and were males, although females predominated in eight states in the third year. The single largest population served continued to be white. Of a total staff of 2,000 in year 2, 50 percent were volunteers. For year 3, 57 percent of the total staff of 1,370 were volunteers. Barriers to success in both years included the following: participants who left a shelter or moved away from the program area, shelter limitations, existential factors, and program limitations. Program elements that promoted success were additional funding sources, coordinated services, and program locations. Instructional elements that promoted success included life planning, family literacy, stress management, and mastery of instruction in small, self-contained units. Recommendations were made for improvement in the areas of instructional program, staff training, evaluation, and program support. (YLB)

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ED359400

ADULT LEARNING & LITERACY

EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS ADULTS

THE 1989 - 1990 REPORT

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Division of Adult Education and Literacy
Office of Vocational and Adult Education
U.S. Department of Education

October 1992

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INTRODUCTION

Homelessness in America has become a major concern for policymakers, educators, social service agencies, and citizens. A number of federal and state programs have been created to deal with the plight of homeless men, women, and children. In 1987 a federal program was created to address the relationship between education and homelessness.

Congress formally recognized this relationship on July 22, 1987, by enacting the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, (Public Law 100-77). Title VII-A of that legislation authorized a program of "Statewide Literacy Initiatives ... that would:

- Include a program of outreach activities; and
- Be coordinated with existing resources such as community-based organizations, VISTA recipients, adult basic education recipients, and nonprofit literacy-action organizations."

From this legislation evolved the Adult Education for the Homeless (AEH) program. The purpose of the program is to "enable each (state) agency to develop a plan and implement a program of literacy training and basic skills remediation for adult homeless individuals...." (Public Law 100-77, Title VII, Sec. 702). A December 1990 publication of the Division of Adult Education and Literacy, entitled *Education for Homeless Adults: The First Year*, reported on the activities and outcomes of the program, for which $6.9 million was appropriated in fiscal year 1987.[1]

In the second year (fiscal year 1988), $7.2 million was appropriated for the program and allocated to all states on a formula basis. As in the first year, every state received at least $75,000. Some received more based on their proportion of non-high school graduate adult residents. For example, smaller states such as Rhode Island and South Dakota received the base amount; larger states like California and New York received $400,000 to $500,000.

In its third year (fiscal year 1989), $7.1 million was available for the AEH program, but the allocation of funds was made on a discretionary (competitive) basis. This change was made to make better use of limited funding by directing it to those states with the highest quality applications. Thirty states were funded.

Funding for fiscal years 1988 and 1989 overlapped. But the states receiving 1989 awards maintained separate reporting data and some states funded different local programs from each allocation. This enabled the Division of Adult Education and Literacy to compile and analyze data by program year.

The period covered by this report includes those two years of funding and extends from the fall of 1989 to the winter of 1990, approximately 15 months for all but a few states. This report includes data received from 48 (of 52) year two projects and 26 (of 30) year three projects. At the time this report was developed, some state reports had not been received.

The information contained in this report is intended to offer guidance to programs currently in operation. The funds appropriated for the fourth and fifth years of the program were $7.4 million and $9.8 million, respectively.

[1] *Available from the Clearinghouse, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202-7240.*

THE PROGRAMS

APPROACHES

As in the first year of the AEH Program, a majority of second and third year projects tended to focus on either delivery of services in urban areas or a state-wide approach. A few states continued an approach that resulted in service primarily to women. In other states, development/capacity-building approaches were replaced with expansion of services and institutionalization of effective practices, many of which had been tested in the first year.

The urban focus approach continued in such diverse states as New York, North Carolina, Connecticut and Utah. Those adopting a state-wide approach included Arkansas, Washington, Delaware, California, and Texas among others. Eight states emphasized services to women.

NUMBER OF ADULTS SERVED

The total number of homeless adults served in year two increased 60 percent over year one. Year three enrollment declined for at least two reasons: some "high number" states, like Alabama and Florida, did not receive year three funds; and projects using year three funds placed priority on program quality over numbers served.

The variety of approaches and services exhibited among states is illustrated by the range of the number of homeless people served. Of the more than 29,000 adults served during year two, more than 16,000 (55 percent) were located in ten states. In year three, nine states each served more than 1,000 students, representing 70 percent of the over 24,000 served nationally (Figure 1).

COMPOSITION OF POPULATION SERVED

Homeless adults participating in the programs represent all ages as indicated in Figure 2. The largest number by far, however, were between the ages of 25-44. Large numbers of young homeless adults were served in ten states during year two: Alabama, California, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Ohio, and Texas. Only three states--Alabama, Florida, and Texas--served a substantial number of middle-aged and older adults (45 years of age or older). In one region of the country, the Midwest, women were served more often than men in both year two and year three . The West served predominantly males in both years (Figure 3).

Largest Number of Adults Served, by State

Year Two

Texas	3,783
Florida	2,736
Alabama	2,007
New York	1,628
North Carolina	1,585
California	1,210
Pennsylvania	1,086
Ohio	1,074
Louisiana	1,069
Illinois	1,002

Year Three

Texas	3,712
Ohio	2,761
California	2,519
New York	1,857
Georgia	1,550
Maryland	1,294
North Carolina	1,272
Arkansas	1,197
Indiana	1,083

Figure 1

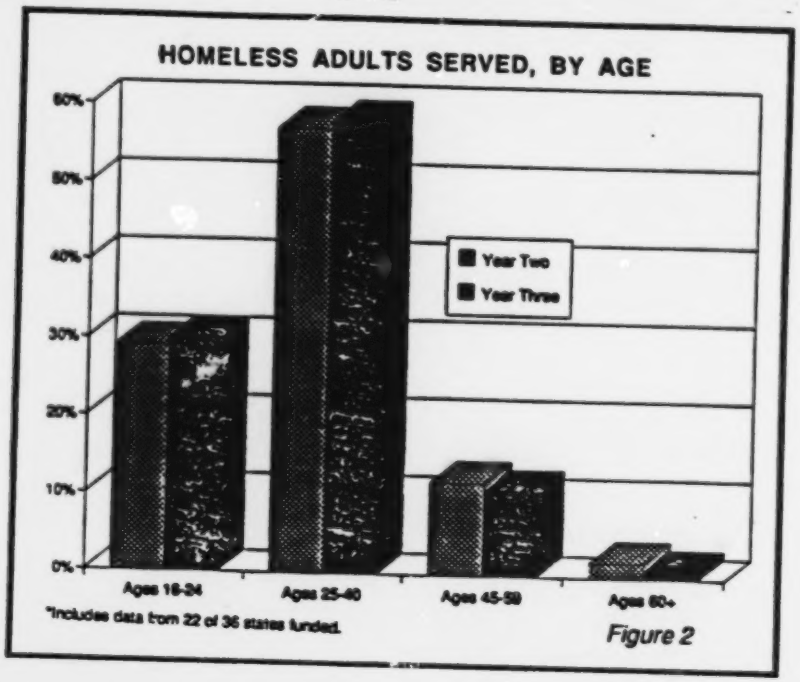

Figure 2

In year three, eight states served substantial numbers of young adults: Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, New York, Ohio, Texas, and Utah. Three states--California, Georgia, and Texas--served relatively large numbers of adults 45 years of age and older.

A majority of homeless served nationwide to date have been males (Figure 3). However, females predominated in eight states in the third year of the program, as indicated in Figure 4.

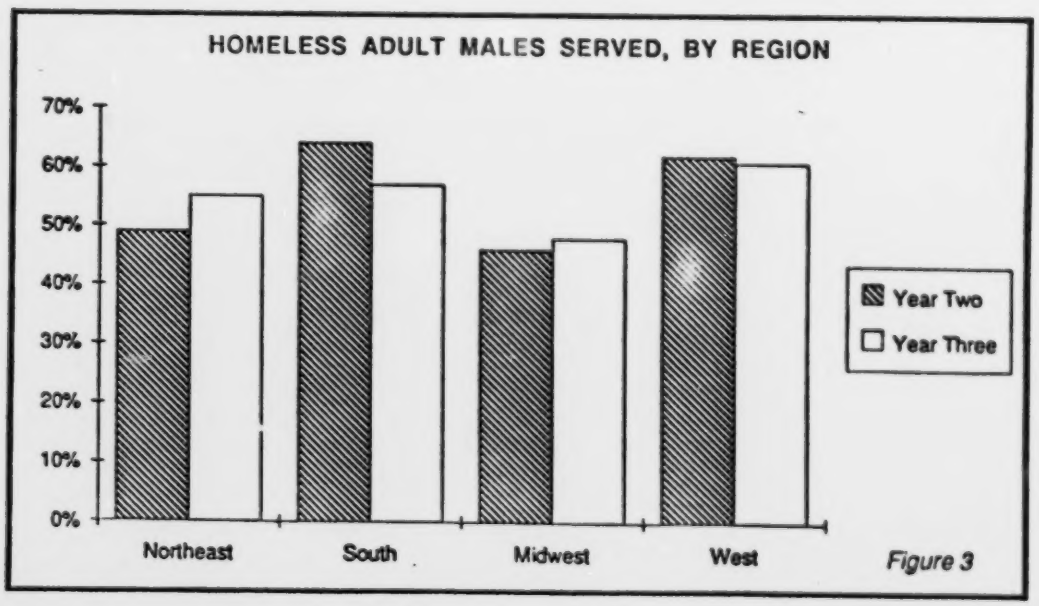

Figure 3

STATES SERVING PREDOMINANTLY WOMEN

Year Two *

Kansas	74%
Vermont	73%
Michigan	69%
Colorado	68%
District of Columbia	67%
West Virginia	65%
Minnesota	62%
Pennsylvania	62%
Indiana	60%
Maryland	60%
Massachusetts	60%
Mississippi	59%
Nebraska	56%
Illinois	55%
Tennessee	53%
Maine	51%

** Data available from 44 states, of 52 funded.*

Year Three ^

West Virginia	97%
Kansas	70%
Michigan	69%
Vermont	63%
Massachusetts	58%
Colorado	54%
Wisconsin	54%
Ohio	52%

^ Data available from 22 states, of 30 funded.

Figure 4

Analysis of the ethnic composition of students in the Adult Education for the Homeless program reveals that the single largest population served continues to be White (Figure 5). States with the highest population of Black clients in year two included Alabama, California, the District of Columbia, Florida, Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Missouri, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas.

In year two, Hispanics accounted for large service populations in seven states: Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, New York, Puerto Rico, and Texas. Service to Native Americans was a priority in Arizona, Oregon, and Utah.

In the third year, large numbers of Black adults were served in Arkansas, California, Georgia, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Texas. Service to Hispanics was a priority in California, New York, Puerto Rico, and Texas. Native Americans were a priority population in Utah and Wisconsin. Wisconsin served the largest number of Asians in both years--65 in year two and 45 in year three.

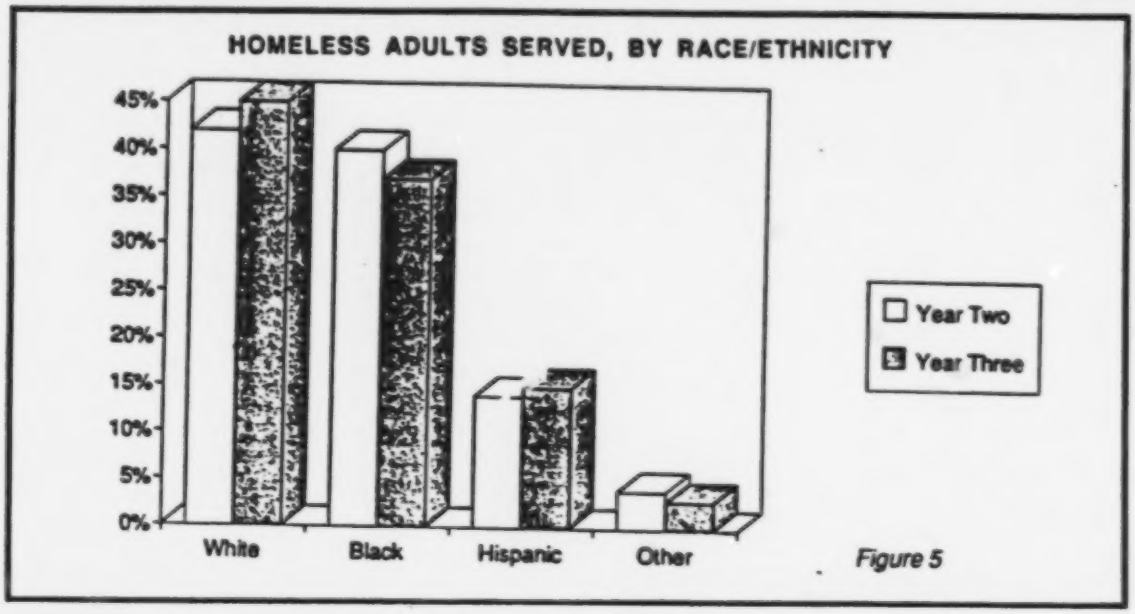

Figure 5

STAFFING THE AEH PROGRAM

Reports from states indicated considerable variety in program staffing patterns. Of the total staff of 2,000 in year two, 50 percent were volunteers. Two-thirds of para-professional positions were staffed by volunteers. For year three, 57 percent of the total staff of 1,370 were volunteers. Again, the para-professional position was the most likely assignment for volunteers.

ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

During the second and third years of the effort, state and local programs built on the initial experiences of the first year. For example, curriculums continued to be developed and improved, and often changed from standard Adult Basic Education (ABE) texts to instruction emphasizing the application of basic skills to the life needs of homeless adults.

As indicated by Figures 2, 3, and 5, the demographics of adults served by the programs remained approximately the same in both years. This is notable in light of the fact that Alabama and Florida--which served large numbers of homeless adults in year two--were not refunded in year three and suggests there is no significant variation in the demographics of the homeless population being served across the nation.

As was the case in the first year, the largest proportion of adult students beginning a training program or gaining employment were located in the southern region.

Staffing patterns also remained constant during the two years covered by this report. Generally, in ABE programs volunteers serve in a teaching capacity as instructional tutors. The AEH Program, however, does not follow this pattern: the greatest number of volunteers serve as para-professionals performing a wide variety of tasks.

Some of the barriers to program success remain after three years of the program, and may well be inherent in the homeless experience. Basic needs often must be met before instruction can become a meaningful endeavor.

However, it appears that in year three programs began to address some of the major barriers. For example, in some programs instructional sites were shifted from emergency shelters to longer-term transitional housing. Also, coordination with other agencies and the success rate of referrals improved.

THE OUTCOMES

BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

Numerous difficulties were cited in the project reports. In year two, more than 6,000 (approximately 20 percent) of the 29,000 students served left a shelter or moved away from the program area before completing instruction. In year three, a smaller percentage of students--13 percent, or some 3,000 of the 24,000 adults served, left shelters or moved away. A compilation of other notable barriers to program success, identified for each program year, follows.

Year Two

Shelter Limitations:

- Poor sleeping facilities
- Beds not available, so classes would not continue on a regular basis
- Shortage of case management staff
- Apathy of shelter staff, which led to scheduling conflicts and lack of encouragement to students to attend
- Facilities that only allow short stays
- Shortage of drug treatment programs

Existential Factors

- Stress of street life
- Transience/mobility
- Basic needs (shelter, food, clothing, medical care) unmet, therefore ABE was not a priority
- Clients busy looking for work/day labor
- Need to meet other appointments
- Distraction of family problems
- Fear of failure, fear of success
- Chemical abuse
- Mental illness
- Resistance to "School"
- Lack of community agency referrals

Year Three

Shelter Limitations:

- Lack of exclusive space for class
- Shortage of drug treatment programs
- Shortage of case management staff

Existential Factors:

- Stress of street life
- High mobility of clients
- Nice weather
- Lack of public transportation

- Lack of referral follow-up
- Misunderstandings about the 12 hour+ rule: Did not count all students served that met their objective(s)

Program Limitations/Problems:

- Volunteer frustration
- Student frustration
- Lack of child care facilities
- Lack of transportation
- Use of irrelevant curriculum
- Staff turnover
- Lack of understanding re: teaching people under stress
- Lack of community agency referrals
- Lack of referral follow-up
- Misunderstandings about the 12 hour+ rule: Did not count all students served that met their objective(s)

Program Limitations/Problems:

- Pre-selected curriculum which did not meet student needs
- Lack of child care facilities
- Lack of counseling services
- Initial use of an academic, standardized test
- Initial use of an academic curriculum
- Staff turnover
- Lack of "closure" (achieving major learning goals)

MEETING OBJECTIVES

In years two and three, most adults entered the AEH programs with employment-related goals that involved objectives like increasing employability skills, entering a training or advanced education program, or finding a job. As a result of educational interventions in year two, 3,125 adults found employment and 2,011 entered training programs or moved on to higher level educational programs. In year three, 2,202 adults found employment and 1,611 entered occupational training or higher level educational programs. Breakdowns of these totals, by region, are given in Figures 6 and 7.

High school completions, although a small percentage of the total number served, are significant, considering the barriers that homeless adults face. During year two, 799 students in 45 states achieved a GED or other secondary diploma. In year three, 782 adults achieved diplomas in 22 states.

Homeless adults are in need of a broad range of educational, health, counseling, training, and social services. Education is rarely the highest priority among other immediate and critical needs. This poses significant challenges for the AEH program as staff work with clients to set short and long-term educational objectives. Educational objectives must be integrated with broader goals of the clients if they are to be met.

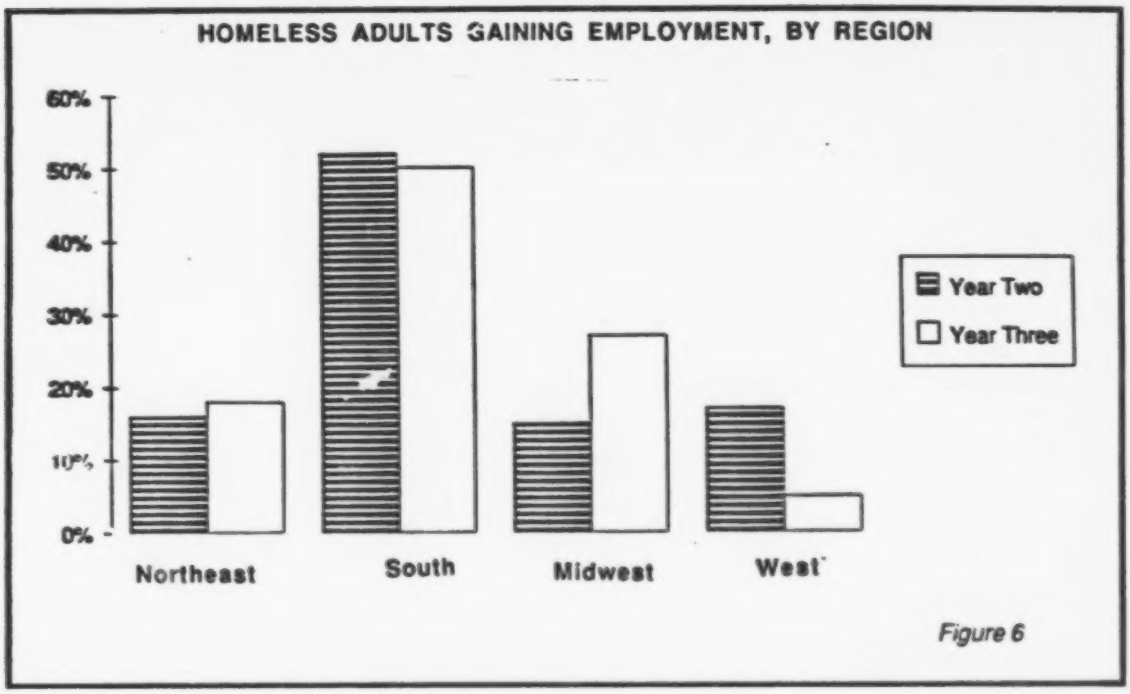

Figure 6

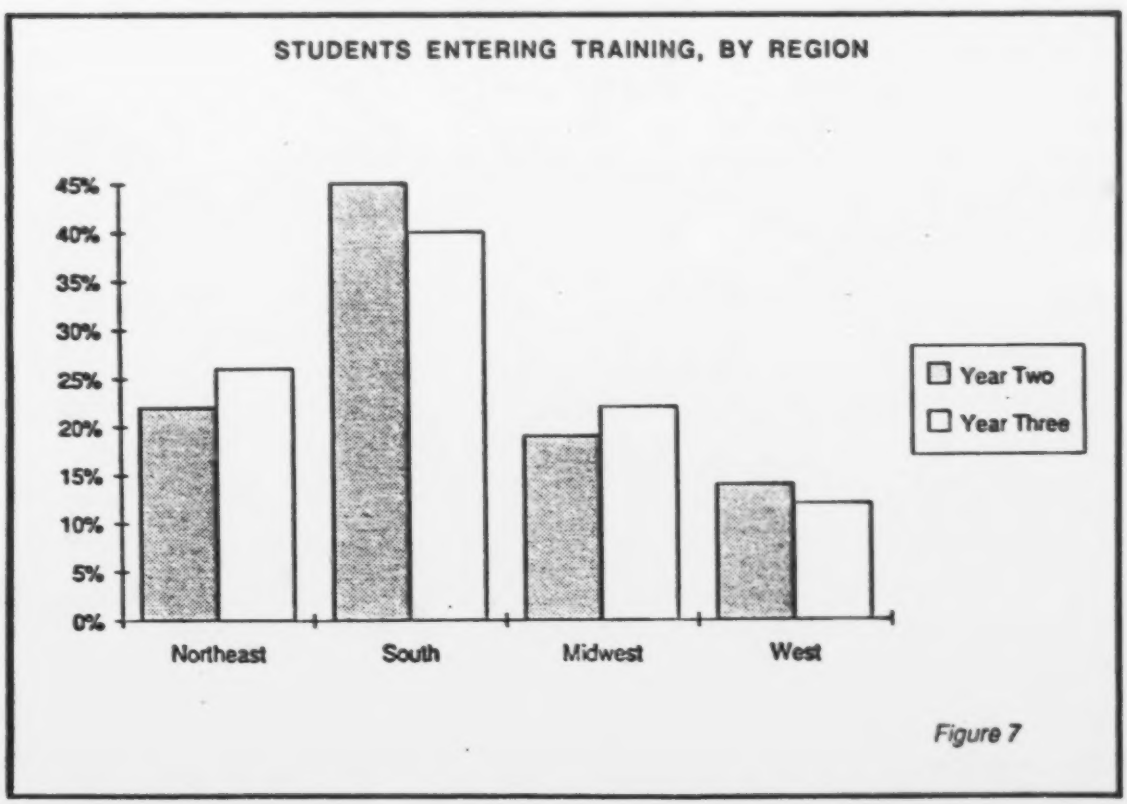

Figure 7

ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS:

As the AEH program experience broadens over time, common elements of effective efforts can be more clearly identified. Reports from projects in years two and three have provided valuable information for future program development and operation. The elements and promising practices contributing to effective programs fall into three main areas: program components; instruction; and linkages.

Program elements that promote success have been similar from year to year, though often expressed somewhat differently in each year's reports. Most notable are additional funding sources, coordinated services such as counseling, and program locations that are accessible to homeless persons.

Instructional elements that promote success are those which assist the learner in applying basic literacy skills in dealing with situations of homelessness. These include life planning, family literacy, stress management, plus mastery of instruction in small, self-contained units.

YEAR TWO

PROGRAM COMPONENTS:

- Strong counseling components
- Case management, including needs and skills assessment, goal setting, access to many types of services, progress monitoring
- Using managers who were previously homeless
- On-site lending libraries
- Student incentives for program participation such as providing free dictionaries, books, and tickets to ball games

INSTRUCTION:

- Special curriculums such as "Know Your City" (Florida), employability workshops, life skills modules
- Real-life activities such as budgeting and shopping, help in filling out housing forms and other documents
- Instruction in APL-based Life Skills
- Consistently-used assessment system, for example, Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)
- Self-contained units of instruction
- Small group instruction
- Computer assisted instruction
- Tutorial instruction as transition to small groups

YEAR THREE

PROGRAM COMPONENTS:

- Use of learning centers devoted to service to homeless adults
- Expansion of the number of providers
- Staff training in working with adults who are under stress
- Instructional sites where adult homeless congregate
- Use of mentors who can relate to the complex dilemma of homelessness
- Funding support from other (non-McKinney Act) sources

INSTRUCTION:

- Use of CBOs to help determine the focus of curriculum
- Use of Individual Learning Plans to document students' needs and goals, and to plan activities
- Life skills emphasis
- Life management and thinking skills instruction
- Incorporation of stress management component
- Use of computer-assisted instruction
- Writing activities to prepare students for GED
- Use of videos focused on social issues
- Interactive instruction (small groups)

- Drop-in sessions
- Choice of in-shelter instruction or classes in adult learning centers
- Writing skills instruction using student-developed publications
- FUTURES workshops for goal setting and life management

Linkages:

- Staff socially and politically active
- Link with established shelters
- Awareness of community and its institutions
- Link with state coalitions for homeless persons

Assessment and evaluation through portfolio and other alternitive assessment methods in addition to, or in place of, formal standardized test

Linkages:

- Involvement of State-wide coalitions and local advisory councils
- Good and consistent "word-of-mouth" recruitment
- Referrals for food, lodging, health services, counseling, legal services, financial assistance
- Outreach for Parenting Education classes in cooperation with Head Start programs
- Providing a forum for shelter operators, community leaders, and educators to discuss needs and develop strategies

STATE AND LOCAL ROLE: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

States continue to make progress in providing useful, relevant and empowering educational services to homeless adults. To continue these efforts and to improve them, the following recommendations--obtained from project reports and an analysis of project results--are offered:

1. Instructional Program

- •States should develop and test alternative curriculums for homeless populations.
- •Curriculums should be expanded to include self-help aspects and positive goal setting.
- •Projects should use the life experience of the learners as a foundation for curriculums.
- •Curriculums should be designed and adapted to meet the needs and interests of the range of people in the program, responding to the diversity of experience, age, gender, race, ethnicity, and parenting status.
- •Instruction should facilitate peer tutoring and the sharing of knowledge among students. Learners should be able to see that they and their peers--not just the teacher-- have useful skills and knowledge.
- •Non-traditional approaches to assessment should be developed to measure the life skills of homeless adults, and the degree to which their skills are being used.

2. Staff Training

- •Instructors who are providing educational services to homeless adults should receive continual training. Training is particularly important, given the broad range of problems that accompany homelessness.
- •Staff from different shelters should meet to share information, experiences, and instructional techniques.
- •Training in the use of a variety of group-building techniques should be offered. Learners need the use of drama, discussions, and small group work to keep them involved in a learning situation.

3. Evaluation

- •Program evaluation should become an integral component of program planning and implementation.
- •Anecdotal information on learner successes should be gathered and summarized to communicate project success.
- •Local program advisory boards should include homeless learners among their membership to provide feedback and enhance accountability.

4. Program Support

- •Shelter staff support should be recognized as critical to successful operation of AEH projects. This support can include providing storage space for instructional materials, quiet space for study and testing, and space/materials for group work.
- •States should fund programs that can ensure longer term stability to homeless adults.

FEDERAL ROLE: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION REVIEW OF ADULT EDUCATION FOR THE HOMELESS PROGRAM

The U.S. Department of Education's Offices of Policy and Planning (OPP) and Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) will conduct a comprehensive review of the Adult Education for the Homeless Program during 1992-1993. The study will provide quantitative and qualitative data on program operation and the impact ofservices. This study has three major objectives:

- •To provide comprehensive, descriptive information about the AEH program that can be used by the Department to improve the program;

- To examine the range of literacy skills among program participants; and
- To identify possible procedures and methods that AEH projects may use in evaluating their operation and services.

To accomplish the objectives of this task, the contractor, Pelavin Associates, Inc., will conduct several activities culminating in a final report early in 1993.

- Review existing data
- Conduct telephone interviews with AEH Coordinators
- Conduct site visits to a representative sample of AEH projects
- Conduct state and local data collection
- Convene a meeting of state and local program coordinators
- Analyze data and prepare report. The study will guide practice and policy for the decade of the 90's
- Develop guidelines for states

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR

In November 1991, the U.S. Department of Labor convened a two-day conference on the Job Training for the Homeless Demonstration Program (JTHDP), also funded under the McKinney Act. The conference was designed to highlight the accomplishments of the 21 local JTHDP grantees, the challenges they face, and the ways in which the Department of Labor and its national evaluation contractor, James Bell Associates, plan to assist them in 1992. Local data collection, the national evaluation effort, and local self-evaluations were among key topics covered.

Major issues discussed included:

- Prioritizing target pkopulations for service,
- Collaboration and linkages,
- Immediate employment versus retention in the program,
- Housing needs,
- Drug and alcohol dependency services,
- Staff training needs.

INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON THE HOMELESS

The Interagency Council on the Homeless conducts Regional Conferences each year. The following recommendations for AEH programs have been developed at these conferences:

- Target funding for services to particular groups, i.e., elderly and mothers with young children,
- Develop family literacy programs for homeless parents and children,
- Provide child care services to facilitate parent participation in education programs, and
- Change the provision for annual funding of programs to long range or formula funding.

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For additional information on the Federal Adult Education for the Homeless Program, contact: James Parker, AEH Coordinator, Program Services Branch, Division of Adult Education and Literacy, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202-7240 (202/205-5499).